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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA: NEGOTIATIONS STALLED BETWEEN THE TFG AND
ASWJ

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C/NF) Summary. As of May 26, negotiations in Addis Ababa between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Alhu Sunnah Wal Jammah (ASWJ) were stalled because ASWJ was demanding the prime ministership and senior cabinet positions in a potential coalition government, demands that the TFG was unprepared to meet. The Ambassador and visiting Embassy Nairobi Somalia Unit Chief met with both sides and the Ethiopian government in a series of meetings on May 20-21. Both the TFG and ASWJ remain eager to come to an agreement because both sides recognize that they need each other's support to defeat al-Shabaab. The Ethiopian government also recognizes the value of a TFG-ASWJ alliance and is pressuring both sides to make a deal as soon as possible. Embassy Addis Ababa, in close consultation with Embassy Nairobi, will continue to push the parties to find a compromise, and at least begin military cooperation now. End Summary.

ASWJ Seeking Power Sharing Arrangement, Distrustful of TFG

¶2. (C/NF) The self-described ASWJ leadership council on May 20 said they were ready to fight side-by-side with the TFG provided a power-sharing arrangement could be agreed upon that gave ASWJ cabinet posts and perhaps the prime ministership. The council remained vague about exactly what they would or would not accept as part of power sharing with the TFG, but they made it clear they expected to become a major part of the government in return for their military support. They were distrustful of TFG President Sheikh Sharif and believed him to be a Wahhabi, although they said they would support him if the terms were strong enough. However, they were concerned that in joining the TFG they would lose their identity as a group, and insisted that whatever arrangement was agreed upon, they would maintain some kind of separate identity. The council made a plea for direct U.S. military assistance, but urged the Ambassador to pressure the TFG to accept ASWJ's offer of support.

¶3. (C/NF) The Ambassador informed the council that Washington supported ASWJ joining the TFG in a manner that strengthened the TFG as the government of Somalia. PolOffs stressed that given events on the ground, it would be advantageous for all concerned that, at a minimum, the two side's military forces begin to cooperate against al-Shabaab now, while continuing broader political talks with the TFG on a formal power-sharing arrangement that would undoubtedly be long and difficult. PolOffs stressed that the United States would not support ASWJ as a separate entity.

¶4. (C/NF) On May 21, TFG Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan believed that some type of agreement with ASWJ was likely in the next few days. He said the TFG was prepared to offer a number of deputy minister positions, but not the senior positions. He said he was committed to sharing the TFG's resources with ASWJ military forces in the field. However, he was concerned that the TFG and ASWJ were on divergent political paths, but he recognized that both sides needed each other, and therefore, it was in their mutual interest to come to an agreement now. The Ambassador restated Washington's position as related to ASWJ the day before, and emphasized the importance that the sooner an agreement could be reached, the better for all concerned.

Ethiopian Government Pushing Both Sides to Make a Deal

¶5. (C/NF) Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu on May 21 said Ethiopia was pressuring both the TFG and ASWJ to come to an agreement. He said Ethiopia was not concerned with the framework of the agreement as long as it did not upset the current structure of the TFG or result in yet another shuffling of ministers. He assessed that ASWJ had military credibility, but that it did not yet have political credibility. He suggested that ASWJ run for office in two years when the current term of the TFG ended. He believed that the TFG probably would not survive if it did not ally itself with ASWJ now, and he opined that the TFG would have already fallen if ASWJ had not been diverting

al-Shabaab's military efforts in central Somalia. Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin in a separate meeting on May 22 echoed Tekeda's comments.

As of May 26 Talks Stalled

¶6. (C/NF) Conversations with the parties on May 26 revealed that the talks have stalled because ASWJ continues to demand senior government posts to include the prime ministership. TFG officials remain eager to come to an agreement with ASWJ, but they will not concede to ASWJ's unrealistic demands. Sharif Hassan departed Ethiopia on May 23, and TFG Minister of Security Omar Hashi is now in Ferfer, Ethiopia preparing to re-enter Somalia and attack al-Shabaab in Hiraan in the next couple weeks. ASWJ leaders remain in Addis Ababa and are continuing to meet with Ethiopian officials.

Comment

¶7. (C/NF) In our view, ASWJ is overestimating the strength of their position and making unrealistic demands of the TFG. The TFG, on the other hand, is wary of ASWJ because they fear that ASWJ may become too strong, and as a result, Sharif Hassan wants to incorporate ASWJ now before ASWJ becomes a political threat to the TFG. To the extent possible, Embassy Addis Ababa, in close consultation with Embassy Nairobi, will continue to press the parties to begin military cooperation while political talks continue. End Comment.

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